



Engineman completes written damage control test aboard USS *Rushmore*, operating in 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet area of responsibility, June 4, 2015  
(U.S. Navy/Chelsea Troy Milburn)

# Department of Defense Terminology Program

By George E. Katsos

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The Department of Defense (DOD) Terminology Program was formalized in 2009 by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and falls under the responsibility of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS).<sup>1</sup> The program is overseen by the director of Joint Force Development (DJ7) to improve communications and mutual understanding through the standardization of military and associated terminology within DOD, with other U.S. Government

departments and agencies, and between the United States and international partners. It includes U.S. participation in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) terminology development as well as other terminology forums.

## Policies

The standardization of military terminology is established under two policies: DOD Instruction (DODI) 5025.12, *Standardization of Military and Associated Terminology*, and CJCS

Instruction (CJCSI) 5705.01, *Standardization of Military and Associated Terminology*. Since the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, both documents continue to mature and guide the department on terminology standardization at all workforce levels.<sup>2</sup> DODI 5025.12 is the Defense Secretary's overarching policy for the DOD Terminology Program. Revised in April 2017, it applies to all DOD components including OSD, military departments, the Office of the CJCS, Joint Staff, and combatant commands.<sup>3</sup> Issued by the deputy chief management officer in OSD, this instruction directs the Chairman to manage the DOD Terminology Program, develop and maintain the *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (DOD Dictionary), and resolve terminology issues. An initial set of terminology criteria is provided that is further built upon by the Chairman's Instruction. CJCSI 5705.01F (revised in September 2017) establishes the Chairman's policy and implementation procedures for the joint force.<sup>4</sup> The CJCSI supports and is in compliance with the DODI. The DJ7 provides general/flag officer oversight for the Chairman to coordinate, standardize, and disseminate DOD military and associated terminology. In support, the director delegates development and management responsibilities to the deputy director for Joint Education and Doctrine, who appoints and supervises the DOD terminologist to facilitate the program. The Chairman's Instruction not only refines procedures on how to introduce term and definition additions, modifications, or deletions to the DOD Dictionary but also introduces a new procedure to revalidate existing terms and definitions from non doctrinal sources. The instruction also includes more clarity on the differences between joint doctrine and policy terms as well as the process to maintain a database where policy terms reside outside the DOD Dictionary.

## Processes

Processes are managed by organizational personnel. There are terminologists within the joint doctrine develop-

ment community who make it their job that *words matter*. This terminology community consists of the DOD terminologist, Service and National Guard Bureau joint doctrine planners and organizational terminologists, and points of contact from OSD and other DOD components. Additionally, Joint Staff doctrine planners individually maintain joint publication (JP) glossaries and represent DOD organizational terminology positions to NATO. Regardless of these occupations, individuals from the joint force can propose new terms and definitions through their own organization processes for consideration in any forum.

Proposed terms and definitions for the DOD Dictionary are introduced under five processes. The first is DOD terminology proposed from joint doctrine JP glossaries. Under this process, a group of organizational representatives and subject matter experts that comprises the joint doctrine development community conducts its own maintenance of glossary terms and definitions that are reflected in the DOD Dictionary. Its community-based consensus—governed under CJCSI 5120.02, *Joint Doctrine Development System*, and CJCS Manual 5120.01, *Joint Doctrine Development Process*—continues to be the sole driver for clear, concise, and complete DOD Dictionary joint doctrine terms and definitions.

Next is DOD terminology directed by the Secretary of Defense, Deputy Secretary of Defense, or CJCS via specific memoranda. These are policy terms directed for placement into the DOD Dictionary to fill a void in joint doctrine with the caveat that they may be adopted into or modified by JP revisions, thus becoming joint doctrine terms.

Third is DOD terminology proposed from DOD (OSD/Joint Staff) issuance glossaries. After being socialized with the DOD terminologist and correctly staffed, these terms of policy origin are proposed to fill gaps and start conversations in joint doctrine until it catches up with and adopts or modifies the terms in JP glossaries, also becoming joint doctrine terms.

The two remaining steps are proposals of NATO terminology that are

introduced during JP development and DOD terminologist administrative changes that reflect results of revalidation proposals or directed action by senior leadership.

## Principles

The Chairman's Instruction includes three fundamental principles as the basis for appropriate DOD Dictionary term and definition development: clarity, conciseness, and completeness. To propose a successful term and definition, the submission first must be *clear*, focusing on articulating what the term means. It should not contain doctrinal or procedural information on how or why a term is used or address the term itself. Next, the definition must be *concise*, being brief as possible and including only information that makes the term unique. The definition should be limited to one sentence whenever possible. The last principle is that the definition should be *complete* by including all information required to distinguish the term from those that are similar. This includes addressing an associated parent term if applicable. Whenever possible, definitions should use the two-part definition form. For example, "*theater of operations*: an operational area defined by the geographic combatant commander for the conduct of support of specific military operations." In this case, the first part (operational area) specifies the relevant general type and the second part (defined by the geographic combatant command) specifies the instance of the type that is being defined.

Common errors plague term and definition proposals and the following examples should be avoided: multiple definitions that include a series of numbered definitions for different meanings, incomplete definitions that are not detailed enough to include all items necessary, overly restrictive definitions that are too detailed and exclude items that should be covered, circular definitions that repeat the term being defined as part of the definition or used as a characteristic, negative definitions that state what is not covered rather than what is covered, and hidden definitions that embed definitions of one

**Table. Nineteen Criteria for Inclusion in the DOD Dictionary**

1. Merriam-Webster dictionary term is inadequate for DOD use
2. Not a Merriam-Webster dictionary definition with non-definitional added text (fluff)
3. Not self-defining (bomber aircraft: an aircraft that delivers bombs)
4. Not a policy term that competes/overrides a doctrinal term in the DOD Dictionary
5. Follows established procedures (pre-signature DOD Terminologist coordination, otherwise term referred to Terminology Repository)
6. Reflects extant DOD capabilities and practices
7. General military or associated significance (technical terms may be included if defined in easily understood language and of general military or associated significance)
8. Weaponry terms are limited to generic weapon systems
9. Not to consist of/contain shortened word forms (abbreviations, acronyms, or initialisms)
10. Must be UNCLASSIFIED (including shortened word forms) and marked as such
11. No prowords, code words, brevity words, or NATO-only terms
12. Not Service- or functionality-specific unless commonly employed in U.S. joint force operations
13. Approved joint term with similar definition does not exist
14. Consistent with U.S. law, treaties, international agreements, and executive orders
15. Noun terms should be in singular form
16. No proper names
17. No separate cross-reference entries ("Universal Time" is also called "ZULU time," no separate entry for "ZULU time")
18. Must appear and be used in the content of the document (not just in its glossary)
19. Should be written as a definition (what it is) and not as a description (how/why it works)

term inside another. These principles and lessons learned from common errors inform boundaries for the 19 criteria in the Chairman's Instruction to determine the quality and acceptability of terms and definitions for inclusion in the DOD Dictionary (see table).

## Products

Terminology products are the tools employed to provide transparency of DOD terminology usage within the joint force and for interagency partners. For the purpose of this review, the following products managed by the DOD terminologist are examined: the DOD Dictionary, the *Terminology Repository of DOD (OSD/JS) Issuances*, and the *U.S. Government Compendium of Interagency and Associated Terms*.

The DOD Dictionary was first published by the Joint Staff in 1948.<sup>5</sup> Now issued monthly, it reflects over 2,400 general and universal terms and definitions in JP glossaries (98 percent), known as joint doctrine terms, as well as policy terms that fill joint doctrine gaps (2 percent) addressed by senior leader

memoranda and DOD policy issuances.<sup>6</sup> This document supplements common English-language dictionary terms and definitions in a military context clearly distinguished from other terms. Military terms with more descriptive or narrative text constrained by CJCSI definition criteria are not reflected in the DOD Dictionary but can exist as content within JP chapter text. Those interested in developing new term and definition proposals should access this official resource first prior to precoordination to determine if the term(s) exist, then cross-reference terms and their derivatives that are reflected in the OSD and Joint Staff policy database—known as the Terminology Repository—for situational awareness. Additionally, a basic but non-exhaustive list of shortened word forms (abbreviations, acronyms, and initialisms) criteria is provided as an appendix for general guidance. Shortened word forms included in the DOD Dictionary appendix only reflect those used in individual JPs.

The *Terminology Repository of DOD (OSD/JS) Issuances* is a database that tracks OSD and Joint Staff terms in

nondoctrinal policy glossaries. Updated quarterly, the Terminology Repository was established in 2016 to provide awareness of specific and technical policy terms and definitions that are sourced or reside outside of joint doctrine.<sup>7</sup> Now in one location, over 22,000 entries of terms and definitions can be viewed and tracked from over 1,200 OSD and 400 CJCS issuance glossaries. Duplicate term entries from multiple individual issuances are included by design to track differences in organizational definitions and approaches in understanding terms. When developing glossaries, it is recommended to review the Terminology Repository after reviewing the DOD Dictionary in order to develop a full understanding of DOD's usage of the term and potential derivatives. It is also recommended that future issuance glossaries follow CJCSI criteria for developing organizational policy terms to refine and improve overall DOD terminology. The process for updating the Terminology Repository can be found in the CJCSI as well as OSD and Joint Staff workforce policies and checklists.

The *U.S. Government Compendium of Interagency and Associated Terms* was developed to provide visibility on standard terminology used in department dictionaries, U.S. Code, and cooperation activities of the executive branch.<sup>8</sup> DOD Dictionary terms and definitions are reflected in this document to increase efficiencies among and between workforces. Generated by the Joint Doctrine Interorganizational Cooperation Terminology Working Group and created by action officers from all executive branch departments and many agencies, this inaugural release of more than 12,000 entries will be annually revised. As practiced in the Terminology Repository, the appearance of duplicative term entries with different definitions is by design to show differences in organizational approaches, usage, and understanding. The document also contains foreign and domestic thematic lists for reference to enhance workforce interoperability in steady state activities, disaster relief, or other missions. This unofficial document is nonbinding, socialized, used to break



C-5 Galaxy aircraft crew chief assigned to 167<sup>th</sup> Maintenance Squadron, West Virginia Air National Guard, performs engine check after C-5 lands at Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina, July 22, 2013 (U.S. Air Force/Dennis Sloan)

down organizational stovepipes, and published with the understanding that it not be definitive of a mission or function of any organization. The process for updates is generated through an annual staffing to the organizations under a call for information.

### The Way Ahead

The program's continued socialization to the personnel that make up the joint force is paramount to the growth of DOD terminology management. To build on its momentum, informal rollouts continue at all levels of the department with many elements. Five elements help continue to build momentum. The first is the need to expose the joint force to the differences between joint doctrine terms and policy terms. The second is to socialize the Chairman's processes, principles, and criteria that exist and explain why the supremacy of the DOD Dictionary matters over any other framework. The third is to provide maximum awareness of the Terminology Repository and its role on how it supports the foundation and does not threaten the supremacy of the DOD Dictionary. The fourth

is the need to reinforce cooperation with non-DOD organizations through terminology transparency in pursuit of maximum interoperability.<sup>9</sup> The last is the need to continue tracking the terminology that informs these products to push the DOD Terminology Program and the joint force further into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These steps are guaranteed to empower workforce staff and action officers in solving problems that involve language before they reach senior leadership.

As the joint doctrine development community continues its own maintenance of terms and definitions, its community-based consensus will continue to be the sole driver to improve the standardization of military terminology and relevance of the DOD Dictionary. Still, challenges remain in joint doctrine terminology development and maintenance where legacy terms from the Cold War (for example, *warfare*) and the conflated use of terms (for example, *operation, effect*) continue to challenge forward-thinking perspectives within the joint force. As such, the DOD Terminology Program will continue to protect and build upon the DOD

Dictionary's purpose where clear, concise, and complete terms and definitions reside.<sup>10</sup> JFQ

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Department of Defense Instruction (DODI) 5025.12, *Standardization of Military and Associated Terminology* (Washington, DC: DOD, August 14, 2009), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum of Policy No. 109, *Standardization of Military Terminology*, June 1, 1959; DODI 5000.9, *Dictionary of United States Military Terms for Joint Usage* (Washington, DC: DOD, September 23, 1961).

<sup>3</sup> DODI 5025.12, April 11, 2017, change 1.

<sup>4</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 5705.01F, *Standardization of Military and Associated Terminology* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, September 15, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> *Dictionary of United States Military Terms for Joint Usage* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, June 1948).

<sup>6</sup> *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, September 2017).

<sup>7</sup> *Terminology Repository of DOD (OSD/JS) Issuances* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, July 2017).

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Government Compendium of Interagency and Associated Terms (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, July 2017).

<sup>9</sup> James C. McArthur et al., "Interorganizational Cooperation I of III: The Interagency Perspective," *Joint Force Quarterly* 79 (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2015), 106–112; James C. McArthur et al., "Interorganizational Cooperation II of III: The Humanitarian Perspective," *Joint Force Quarterly* 80 (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2016), 145–152; and James C. McArthur et al., "Interorganizational Cooperation III of III: The Joint Force Perspective," *Joint Force Quarterly* 81 (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2016), 129–139.

<sup>10</sup> For more information regarding DOD terminology, see the DOD Terminology Program, available at <[www.dtic.mil/doctrine/DOD\\_dictionary/index.html](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/DOD_dictionary/index.html)>.